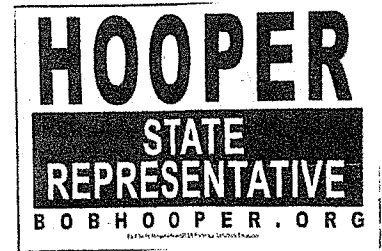


First Session Legislative Report
What I worked on, What I found significant,
What I think will be a priority in January.
Bob Hooper (rjhooper@leg.state.vt.us)



Neighbors:

When I came knocking at your door last fall, one of the points I made was that I intended to go to Montpelier and **DO SOMETHING**, not just occupy a seat— I wanted to try to make a difference for you. This is my report on what I did, helped to do, and helped to gain consensus on with other party members.

Now that the Governor has almost exhausted his time for consideration of a Veto or allowing bills to pass-with or without signature-it is a great time to recount the important things that happened this year-From MY perspective. Please reach out to me if you would like to discuss things in detail, or stop in to the Bagel the 2nd or 4th Saturday of the month, 8 to 9 AM, or at Beach Bites or other POP UP sites around our district. The card in the upper left has my contact information. Thanks!!

As you may have read on my Facebook page, in the North Avenue News or Front Porch Forum, my personal accomplishment was to do something a lot of the “seasoned” legislators tell me was uncommon. I was able to author, seek sponsors, testify in committee, line up Senate support and eventually participate in a signing ceremony with the Governor, a bill that facilitated the burial of Veterans Cremated remains in the Vermont Veterans Cemetery within 180 days, where previously Veterans could remain in a funeral home for an embarrassing amount of time. The testimony taken stated one known Vet waited over 20 years since no one claimed or authorized his burial. Now, the funeral director can transfer remains to Randolph after a diligent search and the Veteran can be given the Honors they deserve in a timely manner. I am proud of this accomplishment and if I get nothing else passed in my legislative career, will consider it a success. However, I also introduced other bills that would protect elderly individuals from being preyed upon by “charities”, Shopping networks, and other opportunistic leaches, as well as a plan to offer recognition to Veterans by making the license plate available at a reduced rate. Lastly a bill to allow people to designate a representative that **MUST** be notified when tax appeals and other administrative actions are taken in local Vermont towns. Uniformity currently does not exist. Please contact me for information on these issues.

Many are talking about the two significant issues that **DIDN'T** cross the finish line this year, and insinuating a negative outcome for the session. I disagree. Although I thought the Paid Family Leave bill may have needed a little more discussion, I would have been happy to have voted for such a insurance policy for workers. Likewise, the changes to the minimum wage would have, in my estimation, created an economic stimulus for Vermont small businesses. Many argued that it would have oppressed business owners, but here in Burlington wages are high **NOW** and small businesses are still flourishing! Even McDonalds has recently advertised over \$13.50 for workers. It is a workers market now, and any business that is not showing a degree of respect may suffer due to a lack of employees. I will continue to support a path to a higher minimum wage to help our young workers and new Americans get off to a good start in this economy.

I supported the 24 hour waiting period for gun purchases **BECAUSE** I am a gun owner and in many many conversations with constituents **MOST** agreed that this bill was an excellent compromise for both sides of the issue. The waiting period does have an impact upon people contemplating self harm. The short (not 72 hours as suggested) period still allows gun show and short notice sales to happen, plus changes to the law passed last session now help to facilitate sporting matches happening in our state again, which is again an economic benefit. I considered this bill a **WIN/WIN** and will vote to override Gov Scott's veto if that vote happens. I know this one is a divisive one and welcome discussion with you on the subject.

As I have noted several times at the NPA meetings, PLASTIC BAGS are going to rest with the dinosaurs and we should each get ready for it. Vermont now has the most comprehensive single use ban in the country so you will be impacted in some way. I supported this in part due to the pollution but also due to the silly use of the chemicals for single use bags rather than saving them for important things like medical devices-where having plastic makes things much more comfortable. Our general idea that we don't need to watch out for our grandchildren's grandchildren is seriously flawed.

I was happy to support a bill that limited the use of chemicals by non professionals, that are proven to be toxic and lethal to our pollinators..... bees and such. Just like having a couple of million bats flying around helps with the mosquitos, having bees in the neighborhood gives us some of the best fruits and veggies by pollinating their little hearts out. They need protection-frankly I would have favorably reacted to banning the chemicals period. Better living thru chemistry is often a lie.

The Governor vetoed a bill this year that essentially dealt with WHO pays for medical monitoring when corporations create environmental conditions that impact public or individual health. S-37 was the bill and I basically said the offender needs to pay for the monitoring of the health impacts of persons who were exposed to their polluting action. For me, to realize that peoples lives are impacted by corporate/industrial pollution could be told it is their financial responsibility to take care of the negative health impacts-or even that it is their insurance companies responsibility- is wrong. In the distant past, corporations were charged with a corporate ethic during the incorporation process to exist and function in the public interest!! I really don't feel that throwing anyone overboard because the Corporation made a "mistake" or that they tried to hide their actions (remember the Love Canal?) Only to be found as a Cancer cluster years down the road. Businesses are good. Good paying jobs are good. Economic development is good. BUT, irresponsible profit grabbing behavior at the expense of health or lives is simply not acceptable. I will continue to work to have corporations "pay their own way" and not ride on taxpayers backs.

Next year, I will continue to push for positive change in areas like- Keeping our environment safe and clean, recognition of our state Veterans, WIFI availability to the last mile (there are even some areas in our own district where cell service is less than stellar!!), as well as some of the initiatives that did not make it over the finish line OR were Vetoed this year.

Looking forward and locally, people have been noticing strange things popping up on top of telephone poles in our neighborhoods. They look like a big can and are attached to a couple of boxes farther down the pole. From everything I have found out so far, they are evidence of a roll out of small site 5G system from AT&T and unless you spend a bunch of time looking UP, you would never notice that just outside your house, a cell site had been installed. I do not believe these sites have been activated yet, but have not found anyone who is able to say what the time frame for using them will be. Keep an eye on my facebook page for developments (Bob Hooper State Representative on facebook).

I can not emphasize strongly enough how much I would appreciate hearing from YOU about what your feelings are with regard to the issues of the day and how we should deal with them in Montpelier. As a member of a citizen legislature, I don't feel it is my job to create things out of whole cloth, but to digest your thoughts and ideas into proposals for consideration by others in Montpelier. YOU in that sentence means "as a community" and not individuals pushing their own agenda. Often that is hard to sort out, but I think as long as folks are willing to discuss and compromise, as an example look at the waiting period bill, a good position can be reached.

As I have said before, I really appreciate your allowing me to enjoy the honor of representing you in the Legislature. I continue to promise to not just sit there and say YES or NO, but to actively work to make Vermont a better place, moving us forward in a responsible and determined way.

Bob Hooper
State Representative
Chittenden 6.1
The GREAT North End